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AN INFORMATION NOTE ON

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON THE UNITED NATIONS

PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVEL

AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

* E/ECA/TPCW.8/1.
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Introduction

A Series of international conferences are planned by the ECA in connection with the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD). Two of these - Africa: The Challenge of Economic Recovery and Accelerated Development and The Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development - are scheduled to be held in 1987.

In order to assist African countries and the international community to fully exploit the opportunities and advantages of the African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER) and the UN-PAAERD, so as to ensure that a truly sound foundation is laid for the achievement of the long-term goals of African development an international conference of experienced African and world experts, officials and policy-makers is being called to undertake an indepth analysis of the necessary conditions, emerging trends and future prospects. A second conference is also being called in order to sensitize governments and the international community to the need to institute measures to protect human wellbeing in the implementation of structural adjustment programmes and policy reform measures, and to look for solutions to the growing human problems of illiteracy, malnutrition, health, high infant mortality, etc. on the continent. One of the adverse consequences and fall-outs of the economic crisis in African countries is a deep human crisis, involving the aggravation of the deterioration of the wellbeing of the generality of the African people.

A. The International Conference on "Africa - The Challenges of Economic Recovery and Accelerated Development", Abuja, Nigeria, June 15-19, 1987

Objectives

The Conference will examine closely a number of issues and concerns arising from the Special Session and its outcome, some of which require

urgent consideration and further elaboration. Coming up exactly a year after the adoption of APPER it will, among other things, examine the emerging evidence from specific case studies and deliberate on whether the Programme is beginning to make the desired impact and what, if any, are the constraints experienced. From the identifiable trends, it should be possible to assess the prospects for African economic recovery and accelerated development and recommend necessary future actions.

More specifically, the following are the objectives of the Conference:

- To critically assess the real chances for economic recovery and medium-term development in Africa, bearing in mind the fact that little economic progress was made on the continent through the 1970s and 1980s despite the adoption of stabilization and structural adjustment measures in many countries.

- To examine the environment - historical, political, social and scientific - for African economic recovery and development with a view to highlighting what changes (policy, attitudinal, institutional, etc.) are needed, and how to bring them about.

- To make comprehensive review of UN-PAAERD with a view to identifying gaps in its diagnosis of the "Critical Economic Situation" in Africa and the relevance of the remedies proffered.

- To assess the extent of implementation of UN-PAAERD so far at national, regional and international levels.

- To undertake a re-evaluation of the overall prospects for long-term economic development in Africa.

The Programme

The Conference is planned in collaboration with the OAU and the ADB. It will be held in Abuja, the new federal capital of Nigeria, for 5 days, from Monday 16 to 19 June 1987.

There are five main themes: Background to African Economic Recovery and Development; The Enabling Environment for Economic Recovery and Development; Implementation of UN-PAAERD by African Governments and Institutions; Africa and the International Community; Trends in African development and Co-operation - to be followed with Synthesis and Reflections on the Challenge of Economic Recovery and Accelerated Development in Africa. The Conference is to be organized into fourteen sessions in all, at the end of which the summary of deliberations will be accepted and an 'Abuja Statement' issued. In between the conference sessions, there is a planned programme of four luncheon addresses to be delivered by some eminent personalities.

Participation at the conference will be of at the highest possible level, involving three main categories:

(i) African Governments, sub-regional and regional organizations and bodies;

(ii) bilateral donors, international institutions and bodies; and

(iii) prominent individuals, Africans and non-Africans, from the universities, the public and the private sectors, who have been invited in their personal capacities.

Expected output

The main output from the conference will be a publication of the record of proceedings which will include a selection of the papers presented and summaries of the discussion and debates. The synthesis of the conclusions will be sent to the following:

- UN Secretary-General;
- ECA conference of ministers;
- All member States of the Commission and ministries of economic planning and finance;
- OAU Secretary-General;
- President of African Development Bank;
- Donor countries;
- NGO's and other international, regional and sub-regional organizations.

Hosting arrangements

The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has graciously consented to host the Conference. In this connection, the Government has agreed to finance the local costs of the Conference. It is also in the process of sending out formal letters of invitation to all African Governments to participate in the Conference.

Funding

In order to finance the external component of the costs of the Conference, an appeal was made to various donor organizations and participating institutions for financial support. So far positive responses and concrete offers of funding have been received from the following organizations: the UNDP, Ford Foundation, the Commonwealth Secretariat, SIDA and CIDA. Discussions are currently underway with other organizations such as the African Development Foundation and the DSE.

Response to invitations

The response to invitation to the conference has been encouraging. Almost all the individuals and institutions invited to present papers or participate in the conference have accepted our invitation. A few of the invited papers have in fact been received already. However, the response of most of our Governments to the ECA letters of invitation is still being awaited, but we have little doubt that these too will be forthcoming as soon as the formal letters of invitation from the Nigerian Government have been received.

D. The International Conference on "The Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development", Libreville, Gabon, 12-15 October 1987

Objectives

Because of the series of economic crisis that African countries have been experiencing since the second half of the 1970s, particularly during the 1980s, there has been much neglect of the human dimension in development in Africa. In fact the situation has been severely aggravated by the structural adjustment measures that have been pursued which emphasize short-term financial and fiscal adjustment concerns rather than long-term balanced development. There is evidence that such adjustment measures have been implemented at high human costs and sacrifices in terms of depressed levels of investment in human resources and on the satisfaction of human needs. Such neglect for the human dimension is not only counterproductive from the point of view of wellbeing, but is also detrimental to the economic process and the achievement of the objectives of recovery and the establishment of a self-sustained and self-reliant development. There is a need thus to ensure that an end is put to such neglect and that a central place is once again accorded to the human dimension in Africa's efforts towards economic recovery and development.

More specifically, the Conference seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To critically assess the central role that the human dimension plays, both as a means to and an objective of development, in Africa's efforts towards achieving economic recovery and accelerated self-sustaining and self-reliant development;

2. To assess trends in a number of African countries as related to human resources development and to the standards of living and analyse the offsetting actions that are required for a broader and a more human-focused approach to adjustment.

3. To identify positive examples of sectoral and national as well as regional and sub-regional actions taken in Africa in recent years which could serve as models of human development that are worthy of being built upon.

4. To propose practical measures at the sectoral and national as well as subregional, regional and international levels through which the strengthening and further development of human capacities and enhancing the human wellbeing conditions are made integral parts of national strategies, plans and programmes of economic recovery and development.

Organization

The Conference will be organized as a collective UN interagency effort under the auspices of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Follow-up on the UN-PAAERD at the Regional Level. A committee composed of ECA (chairman), UNICEF, UNDP, FAO, ILO, UNESCO, WHO, World Bank, IMF, IFAD and ADB has been responsible for all aspects related to the preparation of the Conference. The Conference will be followed immediately, during 19-20 October in Libreville, by ECA Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Development, Planning and Utilization.

Participation

1. African Ministers and senior officials concerned with human resources development and the human dimension of structural adjustment; representatives of African subregional, regional and intergovernmental organizations, donor countries and organizations; African and non-African NGOs. All participants will be expected to cover the cost of their participation.

2. Some prominent African and international personalities will be invited to contribute papers in their personal capacity.

The Programme

The Conference has six themes: (i) The Human Factor and the Challenge of Recovery and Development; (ii) The Human Crisis at the Country Level: Country and Subregional Initiatives to Sustain the Human Dimension Inspite of the Economic Crisis; (iii) The Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Crisis: The Impact on the Vulnerable Groups in African Societies; (iv) Structural Adjustment Measures and Macro and Sectoral Human Dimensions; (v) Long-term Development and Structural Change in Africa: Manpower Development Requirements and Utilization; and (vi) Short- Medium- and Long-term Support for the Human Dimension: The Role of the International and Regional Organizations, NGOs and the Private Sector. Eleven sessions are planned in all, at the end of which a "Libreville Statement on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development" will be adopted.

Expected Output

The main output of the Conference will be the publication of Libreville Statement on the Human Dimension to Africa's Economic Recovery and Development and the proceedings of the Conference. These

will be made available to the following:

- ECA Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Development, Planning and Utilization (16-20 October 1987, Libreville, Gabon);
- UN Secretary-General;
- ECA Conference of Ministers;
- Member States and ministries concerned with human resources development and the human dimension of structural adjustment;
- All UN agencies and organizations;
- OAU Secretary-General
- President of the African Development Bank;
- Donor countries
- NGOs and other international, regional and sub-regional organizations;
- Institutions of higher learning in Africa and specialized research and manpower development institutions.

Hosting Arrangements

The Government of the Republic of Gabon has graciously consented to host the International Conference on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development as well as the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Resources Planning, Development and Utilization and to finance the local costs of the Conference.

Funding

The UNDP has agreed to provide funds to support the participation of the experts who will contribute and present papers and to cover part of the cost of the organization of the Conference and the publication of its proceedings. The participating agencies will also provide funds and other forms of support for the Conference. Other sources of funding are also being solicited.

Response to Invitations

The response to invitations to contribute papers to the Conference has been very gratifying indeed. Almost all individuals and organizations that have been invited to present papers or participate at the Conferenc have responded positively.